IN THE SPECIFICATION

(1) Delete the paragraph on page 73, line 27 to page 74, line 2 and replace it with:

For relative quantitation of the mRNA distribution of NPEPL1, total RNA from each cell or tissue source was first reverse transcribed. 85 µg of total RNA was reverse transcribed using 1 .mu.mole random hexamer primers, 0.5 mM each of dATP, dCTP, dGTP and dTTP (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany), 3000 U RNASEOUT® ~~RnaseOut~~ (Invitrogen, Groningen, Netherlands) in a final volume of 680 µl. The first strand synthesis buffer and OMNISCRIPT® ~~Omniscript~~ reverse transcriptase (2 u/µl) were from (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany). The reaction was incubated at 37°C for 90 minutes and cooled on ice. The volume was adjusted to 6800 µl with water, yielding a final concentration of 12.5 ng/µl of starting RNA.

(2) Delete the paragraph on page 74, lines 3-18 and replace it with:

For relative quantitation of the distribution of NPEPL1 mRNA in cells and tissues the Perkin Elmer ABI PRISM® ~~Prism RTM.~~ 7700 Sequence Detection system or Biorad iCycler was used according to the manufacturer's specifications and protocols. PCR reactions were set up to quantitate NPEPL1 and the housekeeping genes HPRT (hypoxanthine phosphoribosyltransferase), GAPDH (glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase), β-actin, and others. Forward and reverse primers and probes for NPEPL1 were designed using the Perkin Elmer ABI Primer EXPRESS™ ~~Express.TM.~~ software and were synthesized by TibMolBiol (Berlin, Germany). The NPEPL1 forward primer sequence was: Primer1 (SEQ ID NO: 3). The NPEPL1 reverse primer sequence was Primer2 (SEQ ID NO: 4). Probe1 (SEQ ID NO: 5), labelled with FAM (carboxyfluorescein succinimidyl ester) as the reporter dye and TAMRA

(carboxytetramethylrhodamine) as the quencher, is used as a probe for NPEPL1. The following reagents were prepared in a total of 25 µl: 1x TaqMan buffer A, 5.5 mM $MGCl_2$ ~~MgCl2~~, 200 nM of dATP, dCTP, dGTP, and dUTP, 0.025 U/µl AmpliTaq GOLD™, 0.01 U/µl AmpErase and Probe1 (SEQ ID NO: 4), NPEPL1 forward and reverse primers each at 200 nM, 200 nM NPEPL1 FAM/TAMRA-labelled probe, and 5 µl of template cDNA. Thermal cycling parameters were 2 min at 50°C, followed by 10 min at 95°C, followed by 40 cycles of melting at 95°C for 15 sec and annealing/extending at 60°C for 1 min.